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UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH'S INFORMATION LETTER

**ADVISORY REGARDING THE USE OF ARTHROSCOPY IN THE
TREATMENT OF OSTEOARTHRITIS**

1. An article has been published in the New England Journal of Medicine issue dated July 11, 2002, that addresses the use of arthroscopy in the treatment of osteoarthritis. This blinded randomized study was performed in Houston by VHA physicians supported by the Office of Research and Development. The results of the study indicate that the use of arthroscopy for the treatment of pain in the osteoarthritic knee without complicating mechanical factors is no better than placebo. An expert panel will be convened to review these findings and to make recommendations as to the use of arthroscopy in treatment of: osteoarthritis alone; osteoarthritis complicated by loose bodies, meniscal flaps, or mechanical symptoms; and severity of the degree of meniscal tear for which surgical repair should be considered.
2. Pending the expert panel's completed review, it is recommended that the use of arthroscopy with lavage or debridement, solely for the relief of pain in the osteoarthritic knee is not indicated, absent clear clinical evidence of significant derangement or symptoms due to anatomic and mechanical abnormalities.

S/ Louise R. Van Diepen for
Robert H. Roswell, M.D.
Under Secretary for Health

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